Portsmouth, Virginia Police Department
General Orders Manual

Arrestee Suicide Prevention		OPR	58
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Supersedes:	03.12.12	CALEA: 71.3.2, 71.3.3, 71.5.1	
APPROVED: **Dennis A. Mook, Chief of Police**			

PURPOSE: It is the Department's policy to identify all detainees who may be seriously impaired from drugs or alcohol and/or who may become suicidal. The Department is committed to offering the best care possible to all detainees held in temporary detention areas. A critical part of this care is the assessment of those persons who may be seriously impaired and/or suicidal. Once an officer makes an assessment that the detainee is at risk, it is paramount to have a plan for holding and observing these individuals. The procedures that follow outline the steps to conduct a proper assessment, and the procedures to follow when an officer places a person who appears to be at risk from drug intoxication and/or who may have suicidal tendencies in a temporary holding area.

GUIDELINES: The Department will educate officers on suicide prevention and take steps during the arrest and booking process to identify potential warning signs indicating that a person in temporary detention or in custody may be contemplating suicide. This policy outlines preventative measures regarding securing personal property that could be utilized in a suicide attempt, and sets forth an intervention plan should an arrestee exhibit signs indicative of being a high risk for suicide.

PROCEDURES:

I. Prevention:

A. Officers will remove shoelaces, belts, jewelry, scarves, neckties, and any other clothing item commonly used in suicide attempts from all arrestees in temporary detention prior to securing them n a temporary holding room. Officers will then secure the arrestee's wrists (behind their back) to a bullring unless they have a medical condition which precludes them from having both wrists secured. Officers will also use leg shackles on both legs and secure them to the bullring. (71.3.2)

B. Officers will note items they take from the arrestee on the outside of the evidence bag. If officers remove cash from an arrestee they will count the money in front of the arrestee and note the amount on the outside of the bag. Officers will again count the money if they turn a prisoner over to the Sheriff's Department.

C. If an officer has reason to believe based upon behavioral indicators, threats of suicide, harm to self, or other indicators that an arrestee may be suicidal, he or she will follow the procedures described in paragraph II below.

D. Officers may determine the arrestee's suicide potential through the following indicators:

1. Behavioral Clues
   a. Sudden change in behavior;
   b. Difficultly relating to others;
   c. Withdrawal;

d. Evidence of mental illness;
e. Current depression, paranoia, or hallucinations;
f. Despondent or expresses extreme guilt over offense committed;
g. Hopelessness;
h. Crying/tearfulness.

2. Verbal clues
   a. Statement indicating suicide;
   b. Desire to tell family or loved one goodbye;
   c. Intense religious activity;
   d. Speaks unrealistically about getting out of jail.

3. Situational
   a. The arrestee was involved in an incident which resulted in the serious injury or death of a family member or loved one;
   b. The officer took the arrestee into custody for irrational behavior that coincides with the anniversary of a significant event in their life;
   c. The arrestee has just lost their job or home;
   d. The arrestee is experiencing relationship issues.

II. Intervention

A. If an arrestee makes statements that he or she wants to harm him or herself, or if the officer believes based upon observed behavior that the individual is suicidal the officer shall contact Behavioral Healthcare to request a mental evaluation.

B. Once an officer identifies an arrestee as a potential suicide risk, the officer will notify the shift commander immediately, and the arrestee will remain under constant supervision either in person or via a monitor in the Processing Room. (71.3.3 f, 71.5.1 a)

C. Officers shall refrain from executing any arrest warrants until processing occurs. If the Behavioral Health professional decides that a committal is necessary, the officer will make arrangements with the receiving institution to contact the Police Department when the individual is ready to be released. The Officer or their supervisor will contact the Shift Commander to have the details of the committal placed in the Shift Report.

D. If the Behavioral Health professional determines that a committal is not necessary, the officer will document the name of the caseworker and the date and time of that notification. The officer will notify a supervisor of the decision and the supervisor will pass that information on to the Shift Commander for inclusion in the Shift Report.

E. The arresting officer will pass all information regarding a potential risk of suicide on to the intake deputy and document the deputy's name in the IBR.

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